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Developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security

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Report of the Secretary-General**

Addendum

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* A/59/150.
** The information contained herein was received after the submission of the main report.

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Replies received from Member States

Mexico

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[18 August 2004]

1. In our times, marked by an astonishing development of information systems and telecommunications, the international community has grown aware of the fact that, going hand in hand with that advancement, the interconnection of users of those systems has come to be of such magnitude and such varied nature that the territorial and judicial frontiers of States have been overstepped.

2. This high degree of interrelatedness has brought with it a directly proportional level of vulnerability in the sphere of national and international security, thus confirming that telecommunications systems and information are strategic areas that have a great impact on the conditions of international peace and security.

3. For these reasons, Mexico considers that the means to be adopted to limit the threats arising in this field, in addition to being consistent with the need to preserve the free circulation of information and promote the development of those tools for peaceful purposes, must bring tangible benefits in the areas of disarmament and non-proliferation, draw nations closer together and facilitate greater cooperation in this domain.

4. The field of information and telecommunications, Mexico believes, must be examined from a dynamic and forward-looking standpoint, owing to the fact that the rapid rate of scientific and technological development has inevitably created a gap between the standards to be complied with and the actual capacities of such systems, resulting in an immediate increase in potential and real threats in the area of information security.

5. In view of the current relevance of the topic and the importance of studying concepts that will enable us to refer to this phenomenon with greater precision so as to be able to deal with it effectively, Mexico applauds the work commenced in February of this year towards establishing a group of governmental experts to collaborate with the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the elaboration of a study pertaining to the examination of "existing and potential threats in the sphere of information security and possible cooperative measures to address them", as well as "relevant international concepts aimed at strengthening the security of global information and telecommunications systems", as set out in paragraphs 4 and 2, respectively, of resolution 58/32. In this regard, Mexico hopes that the report to be submitted to the General Assembly at its sixtieth session will contain substantive recommendations and bring advances in the conceptual and legal definition of the subject.

6. To that end, Mexico is of the opinion that developments and discussions concerning this theme that take place within the framework of other committees of the General Assembly will be helpful, as will relevant provisions contained in international instruments in force and the advances made by other international organizations, such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), in the fields of international security, international terrorism and information, and the information society.

7. As for paragraph 3 of the resolution, concerning "basic notions related to information security", in particular "unauthorized interference with or misuse of information and telecommunications systems and information resources", Mexico emphasizes that the notion of unauthorized interference may give rise to undesirable confusion, inasmuch as it has connotations related to actions undertaken by certain States which, invoking questionable humanitarian and other grounds, interfere, either alone or in concert with others, in the affairs of other States.

8. Thus, the concept might very well be omitted or replaced by "unauthorized access" or simply "illegal access" to refer to acts carried out by certain persons or entities on information systems.

9. In view of the obvious concern with security problems connected with the potential vulnerability of information systems that control the defence programmes of some countries and the risk that computer science and telecommunications may be used by terrorists or for purposes of deterrence, Mexico reaffirms that dialogue, negotiation, international cooperation and international law represent the only ways to make sure that the measures established to deal with problems of information security do not in any way curtail freedom of information or communication.

Venezuela

[Original: Spanish]
[28 June 2004]

1. The Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela considers that any violation of information security is contrary to the legitimate right of States to full exercise of their sovereignty. Hence the use of information technologies and media for the purpose of political and economic destabilization is contrary to the fundamental rules of democracy.

2. Information security, then, has a twofold character, inasmuch as it relates both to the guaranteeing of the protection and defence of the information and to its proper use and veracity. Both the illicit use and the deliberate non-use of information and telecommunication systems or information resources for purposes of destabilization constitute disrupting factors in the context of international security.

3. Venezuela supports the elaboration of international principles aimed at enhancing the security of global information and telecommunications systems that make possible or facilitate the fight against terrorism and crime in the sphere of information without prejudicing State sovereignty.